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ABSTRACT

School violence is an increasingly serious problem, especially in big cities and public schools. This publication surveys popular methods of violence prevention and divides them into three classes: school-management measures, environmental modification, and educational and curriculum-based measures. The review also considers structural conditions that influence whether schools adopt the most appropriate antiviolence methods for their needs, and examines the ways in which public and private schools differ. The conclusion is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and that disciplinary methods in public schools are constrained by procedural roadblocks to punishment. Private schools, however, can require certain behavioral norms and implement disciplinary actions. The document describes examples of Catholic school discipline policies, based on interviews with principals of 10 Catholic schools. Finally, the document presents data to suggest that compulsory education laws may be contributing to violence in public schools. Repealing such laws at the high school level would alleviate school violence, improve the quality of education, would not flood the streets with delinquents, and would not appreciably increase crime in society at large. The publication encourages innovation and experimentation in schools through decentralization and deregulation. Because incentives matter, violence-prevention efforts must include some level of parental choice, and an emphasis on private, voluntary, contractual methods rather than on compulsory ones. Two figures and seven tables are included. (Contains 134 endnotes.) (LMI)

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